SOME

Seasonable Reflections

ON THE

DISCOVERY

OF

The late Plot.

BEING A

SERMON

Preacht on that Occasion.

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LONDON:

Printed for *Thomas Basset*, at the *George* in *Fleet-street*, and *Fincham Gardiner*, at the *White horse* in *Ludgate-street*. 1683.

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The Preface to the Reader.

THE reason, why I publish this Sermon, is partly to gratifie the desires of some, partly to prevent the misrepresentations of others, but chiefly for the same end, for which I preacht it, viz. to take the advantage of this present opportunity, to make some impressions upon mens minds, which I fear at other times, they will not so easily receive.

I hope all honest men, even Dissenters themselves, do from their hearts abhor those villanous designs against the Life of our King, which God of his great mercy to these Kingdoms, has so lately brought to light: and while they are possest with such an abhorrence of the Treason, it seems to me, to be a very proper season to put them in mind by what means such evil designs have been first formed and encouraged and brought to ripeness and perfection; that those, who have been cheated into a Faction by some plausible pretences, and have followed the general noise and outcry in the simplicity of their hearts, may take warning for the future, and avoid every step and advance towards Sedition and Treason, as well as abhor the Treason it self.

It was impossible to do this, without calling to mind a great many things, which to be sure, those who are any ways concerned, are not now willing to hear of; and that with such plainness, as is necessary to convince men of the evil nature and tendency of such practices: but God is my witness, that I did not this with the least design to upbraid or reproach any men, or party of men, but with the same honest and charitable intentions, though it may be not with the same skill, that a Chirurgeon uses in searching a wound to the very bottom; which is very painful indeed, but absolutely necessary to a Cure.

Some persons, I hear, have objected against this Discourse, that I seem to charge this Plot upon the Protestant Dissenters,

ters, *and insinuate that it is* a Fanatick, a true Protestant Plot. *God forbid that all Protestant Dissenters should be concerned in this Plot, I hope better things of many of them; nor do I undertake to meddle with such matters. All that I meant, is nothing but what is evident to any man, who believes a Plot, that this horrible Conspiracy has been contrived and carried on by those men, who of late have pretended to be the only* true Protestants; *a name, which they would not allow to any man, who appeared zealously concerned either for the King, or the Church of* England. *Whether such men have any Religion or none, whether they go to Conventicles, or to give the better grace to the business, sometimes hear the Common Prayer, is all one to me. I am sure the turbulent spirit, which has of late acted our Dissenters, and their unwillingness to believe any Plot still, gives too just a suspicion of many of them.*

Though we are all bound to praise and adore the Divine goodness in defeating such wicked designs, yet I am so far from triumphing over these men, that I cannot but pity and mourn over them; my heart bleeds for that scandal, that is done to Religion, that advantage which is given to the common enemy, for the sin and the fall of great Men, and the ruine of Noble Families; but what is done, cannot be undone again: our care must look forward, to times to come, to remove the occasions, to root up the very seeds and principles of Sedition, that these shakings and convulsions of State may at last settle in a profound and secure Peace and Tranquillity. If this plain discourse can contribute any thing to so happy an end, I have all that I aim'd at, both in Preaching and Printing it; however, I have the satisfaction of an honest design, which is a reward to its self; and gives that inward contentment and pleasure, which the reproaches and censures of the World, which too often attend such undertakings, can never disturb.

A

SERMON.

XVIII. PSALM, *v.* 50.

Great deliverance giveth he to his King, and sheweth mercy to his Anointed, to David ***and to his Seed for evermore.***

THis Psalm was pen'd by *David* in a thankful remembrance of those many wonderful deliverances, which God had wrought for him; and particularly his deliverance from the hands of *Saul*, a jealous, powerful, and implacable enemy, as we are expresly told, 2 *Sam.* 22. 1.

This Pious Prince, though he were immediately advanced to the Throne by God himself, could not escape the Conspiracies of his enemies both at home and abroad: for Men of Turbulent and restless Spirits, will be sure to find or make some pretences or occasions of quarrel, under the most just and equal Government.

Sometimes men dispute the right of Succession; but this they could not do here, unless they would dispute Gods right to place and displace Princes; for *David* was immediately chosen by God, and anointed by his Prophet, and yet this could not secure him from Conspiracies and Rebellions.

Others pretend great Oppreſſion and Male-adminiſtration of Government, though their licentious noiſes and clamours ſufficiently confute it; for men, who are moſt oppreſt dare ſay the leaſt of it. The Liberties and Properties of the Subject, is an admirable pretence to deprive the Prince of his Liberties and Properties; and thoſe who have any Liberty and Property to looſe, ſeldom gain any thing by this: for when they have ſecured their Liberties and Properties againſt their Prince, it is a much harder task to ſecure themſelves from their fellow-Subjects. Men who have no Property have ſome encouragement to Rebel, and fight for Property; for it is poſſible they may get ſomething in the ſcramble, when all Law and Property ceaſes, but the property of the Sword: but methinks men of Honour and plentiful Fortune, ſhould not be ſo zealous for transferring Properties, to enrich Beggars, and ſubmit their necks to the Yoke and Government of their own Slaves; which our late experience has taught us to be the glorious effect of Rebelling for Liberty and Property.

Others make Religion a pretence for their Rebellion, Religion, the greateſt and the deareſt intereſt of all; but methinks it is a dangerous way for men to Rebel to ſave their Souls, when God has threatned Damnation againſt thoſe who Rebel: but this is as vain a pretence as Liberty and Property; for no men fight for Religion, who have any. Religion is a quiet, peaceable, governable thing; it teaches men to ſuffer patiently, but not to Rebel. And were there any true concernment for Religion in this pretence, can we imagine, that the moſt profeſt Atheiſts, the moſt lewd profligate wretches, the greateſt Prodigies and Monſters of wickedneſs, ſhould be ſo zealous for Religion? But it's evident, it is not Religion, ſuch men are zealous for, but a Liberty in Religion; that is, that every one may have his liberty to be

13 Rom. 2.

of

of any Religion, or of none; which serves the Atheists turn, as well as the Sectaries, but is not much for the honour or interest of true Religion.

So that whatever the pretences are, it is an ambitious, discontented, revengeful spirit, an uneasie, restless, fickle and changeable humour, which disturbs publick Government, and undermines the Thrones of Princes; and therefore it is no wonder, if the best Princes and the best Governments in the world be disturbed by such men; *David* himself could not escape, he had a great many enemies, but *Davids* God was greater than they all, *for great deliverance giveth he to his King, and sheweth mercy to his Anointed, to* David *and to his seed for evermore.*

There is something peculiar in these words, which cannot be applied to any other Prince: for as *David* was King of *Israel*, so he was a Type of the *Messias*, who was to descend from his loynes, and that promise or prediction that he would shew mercy to his Anointed, to *David* and to his seed for evermore, received its full accomplishment, in the Kingdom of the *Messias*, who is said to set upon the Throne of *David*; but yet those deliverances God wrought for *David*, were personal too, and an example of Gods care and protection of Pious and Religious Princes. And when we see the same good providence watching over our Prince, and securing him from the bloody designs of wicked men, we have reason thankfully to acknowledge it, as *David* did; *great deliverance he hath given to our Prince, he hath shewn mercy to his Anointed. Now know we, that the Lord saveth his Anointed, he will hear him from his holy Heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in Chariots, and some in Horses, but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God: they are brought down and fallen, but we are risen and stand upright.* 20 Psalm, 6, 7, 8.

My present Discourse therefore shall consist of these two parts. 1. Briefly to observe to you, those many great Deliverances which God hath wrought for our King. 2. I shall make some practical Reflections on it, especially with reference to this late Discovery.

1. To observe to you, those many great deliverances which God hath wrought for our King. His troubles have not been much unlike, I am sure not inferiour to *Davids*, and his Deliverances have not been less strange and wonderful. I am not a going to give you a History of his Life, but only to point you to some remarkable passages of it, which it becomes us all thankfully to remember.

I suppose no man doubts, how many dangers a Prince is exposed to, who flies before an enraged and victorious enemy; who knows not whither to go, where to hide himself, whom to trust: this was the condition of our Dread Soveraign, who was hunted as a Partridge in the mountains, pursued by his own Rebellious Subjects, who had usurpt his Throne, and thirsted after his Blood. But then God found a hiding place for him, and delivered him from the desire and expectation of his enemies.

But still his condition was calamitous, he was forc't to live in Exile and Banishment, divested of Royal power, and all the ensignes of Majesty, reduced to a precarious, and sometimes a necessitous state, while he saw his Friends impoverisht and ruined, his Loyal Subjects oppresst, his Enemies triumphant, too vigilant, and too powerful to allow any hope to see an end of these troubles. But that God, who can do what he pleases, and oftentimes does such things, as no humane force nor power can effect, put an end to these troubles also; and restored him to his Fathers Throne in Peace and Honour, and with the universal joy and triumph of his Subjects: and I suppose you will reckon this a deliverance,

rance, a great and wonderful deliverance both to Prince and People; a deliverance immediately wrought by God, without Humane policy, contrivance, or power. To see a Prince whose Father was Murdered, and himself forc't into banishment by his own Subjects, without any power of his own, without the help and assistance of Forreign Allies; while his Friends at home were oppress, while the same power that drove him out, was still in the hands of his enemies, while so many persons who were in greatest power were concerned for their own preservation to keep him out; while those who wisht his return, durst not whisper any thing tending to call the King back again; I say, to see a Prince in such circumstances, without striking a blow, without shedding a drop of Blood, return again in the throngs and crouds, and with the acclamations of his Subjects, is no less a Miracle, than dividing the sea to give a safe passage to the *Israelites*: for the Psalmist represents it as an argument of equal power to *still the noise of the the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people. This is the Lords doings, and it is marvellous in our eyes; now know we, that the Lord saveth his Anointed, he will hear him from his holy Heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.* Psal. 7.

And that good Providence, which brought our King back again, has watcht over him ever since. Though he returned in a happy day, when the Seas were smooth and calm, when no frowns were to be seen on mens foreheads, but such cheerful looks as signifyed the inward pleasure and serenity of their minds, yet it could not be expected, that this calm would always last. I think we may now venture to say, without fear of being censured, that there are two sorts of men, that are restless and implacable, and always working under ground, and both of them with an equal pretence of Religion: I

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mean the Papiſt and the Fanatick, I ſhall not take notice of thoſe ſeveral weak attempts they have made ſince the happy Reſtauration of our Prince; there is ſomething greater to imploy our thoughts at this time, ſome more ſignal demonſtrations of that great deliverance God giveth to his King.

We have now for many years had little other diſcourſe than of a Popiſh Plot, a wicked helliſh deſign againſt the Life of our King, and the Religion and Liberties of his Subjects. This was a formidable deſign, laid cloſe and in the dark, proſecuted with deep Counſels and combined intereſts. We may remember, for I think we cannot eaſily forget, what horror and conſternation ſurprized us at the news; we lived in perpetual fear of the Life of our Prince, in perpetual fear of our own: how did the name of Popery deſervedly ſtink among us! how did men abhor a Religion, which is nouriſht with Blood, with Royal and innocent Blood! How zealous were men in their diſcoveries, how watchful in their Guards, how devout in their Prayers for the preſervation of their Prince, and of their Religion! And though poſſibly we have not ſeen to the bottom of that Plot to this day, and it may be never ſhall, yet bleſſed be God, there was enough diſcovered to prevent the miſchief; we ſtill enjoy our Religion, we ſtill ſee our Prince, and rejoyce under the benigne influences of his Government; hitherto God hath ſaved his Anointed from a Popiſh, I pray God ſtill defend him from a Fanatick Plot.

A Fanatick, a true Proteſtant Plot? ſurely that is impoſſible; there can be no danger from that corner; this is only a ſcandal caſt upon innocent and peaceable men. Truly this has been ſo often ſaid, and with ſo much confidence, that we had like not to have believed it poſſible, till it had been too late. It was ſufficient to prove any

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man to be a Papiſt, who durſt own it poſſible, for ſuch good men to Rebel, or Plot againſt the King and Government; and yet it was very hard not to think that poſſible to be done, which had been done once already, and that ſo lately, as not to be forgot, though it was pardoned; an Act of Oblivion could not wipe it out of mens memories, eſpecially when they ſaw the ſame things begin to be acted over again, with the ſame Religious pretences. I am apt to think, we had been more ſecure from the Popiſh Plot, than for ought I know, we may yet be, had not theſe men abuſed peoples fears and dangers of Popery to the diſturbance of the Government, and to the carrying on their Antimonarchical and Fanatick deſigns. We remember how ſoon the Popiſh Plot was turned into a great noiſe and cry againſt the Church of *England*; and no way was thought ſo fit to keep out Popery, as to pull down the Church; and thus the poor Church of *England*, which had eſcaped the rage and fury of *Rome*, had like to have been ſacrificed to a true Proteſtant zeal, which no doubt had given a fatal blow to Popery. *Hoc Ithacus velit, & magni mercentur Atridæ.*

How things proceeded after this to the diſturbance of the publick peace, and the interruption of the ordinary courſe of Juſtice, you all know, as well as I; and wiſe men quickly ſaw, and honeſt men could not forbear warning the people, whither theſe things tended: and they met with a good reward for it; they were all Papiſts in Maſquerade, and eſpecially the Loyal Clergy were loaded with all the contempt and ignominy, which an inraged and envenomed zeal, and ſome witleſs ſcriblers could caſt on them. Whole vollies of Pamphlets flew about to poyſon the people with lewd and Seditious Principles; but to talk or write or preach about Obedience to Government, or patient ſuffering for a good cauſe

cauſe, was to betray the Proteſtant Intereſt, and to invite a Popiſh Succeſſour to cut our Throats: and what all this ends in, thanks be to God, we now ſee, and I hope, time enough to prevent it.

I do not pretend to tell you any thing which you do not all know; Time, and the care of our Governours, and the guilty Conſciences of Rebels, and the good providence of God, I hope, will make further Diſcoveries, and bring theſe ſecret works of darkneſs into open view; but we know enough to praiſe God for his great deliverance, which he hath given his King; we know enough to admire and adore that infinite wiſdom who by the moſt ſeemingly caſual and contingent events, can ſo eaſily diſappoint and defeat the deſigns of wicked and bloody men. Who ever ſuſpected, that the fire at *Newmarket* was ſent by God for the preſervation of our King and his Royal Brother, for the preſervation of theſe Kingdoms, of our Liberties and Religion? *Wonderful are thy works, O Lord, and thy ways paſt finding out.*

This ſhort account I have given you, is an excellent Comment upon my Text, a caſe very parallel to *Davids*. The deliverances of our Prince are no way inferiour to that mercy God ſhewed to *David*, when he delivered him from the Lyon and the Bear, from the uncircumciſed Philiſtin, from a perſecuting *Saul*, from a Rebellious *Abſolom*, from a Treacherous *Achitophel*, from the ſtrivings of the people. *Great deliverance ſheweth he to his King, and ſheweth mercy to his Anointed.*

2. And thus I proceed to make ſome practical Remarks and Obſervations on this, which was the thing I principally deſigned. And they are theſe.

1. What a vain and fruitleſs attempt it is to Plot againſt the Life and Crown and Dignity of our Prince, when God undertakes the defence and protection of him.

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Setting aside the wickedness and impiety of it, it is a foolish and dangerous design. Whoever considers only the probable events of humane actions, will be easily convinc't, how unlikely it is, that such Plots should take effect. To miss the very critical minute, spoils all the design; and yet after all the skill and contrivance they can use, there are ten thousand casualties to disappoint them. Such designs cannot be acted alone, but require numerous confederates; and what security can there be, that no one man in such a number shall betray the Secret? Some possibly may be toucht with remorse and horror of Conscience, may be frighted with the very thoughts of that Villany which they designed to act; and then they need no body to betray them but themselves, for no man can long together conceal the fire, which burns in his own breast. Other men may get into the company, and acquaint themselves with all their Intrigues, and act so cunning a part, as to be mistaken for confiding persons; may appear most zealous and most forward in the business, and all this while betray their Counsels, and put an effectual stop to them, when they are ripe for execution: and it is impossible for the cunningest men to prevent this, who have not a Casement into mens Breasts. Other men, who enter into the Confederacy to make their Fortunes, may happen to consider, that it is much the safest and most effectual way to do this by discovering the Plot, than by acting it. The power of Wine sometimes unlocks a Secret, and saves a Kingdom; some unexpected Quarrels and Animosities among the Conspirators, a mutual jealousie of each others greatness; a hasty dispute about dividing the Riches and Honours and Power of the Nation, before they have it, may tempt them to hang one another, and leave the Spoil which they had already devoured in their hopes and expectations, to the right owners.

A desire to rescue some friend out of the common ruin, may save a Kingdom. Walls and Hedges have Ears, and the very Birds of the Air may tell the matter. Their Cabals may be observed and suspected, and their affectation of Secrecy may betray them. Their guilt is often seen in their looks, and creates jealousies and suspicions of some secret design; and an unlucky word, which he meant nothing by, who spoke it, may make them think themselves discovered; and this is a ready way to make them discover themselves. The Heart of the stoutest Rebel may fail him, when he comes to give the fatal blow; or he may miss of his aim, or his Gun may not go off, or he may distrust his own escape, and not be hardy enough to sacrifice his own life in the Cause; and a thousand other accidents, which it is impossible for me to reckon up, may save the Devoted Prince, and Hang the Conspirators: and those had need be men of very desperate Fortunes, or very little understanding, who engage in such desperate designs.

But when to this we add the consideration of the Divine Providence, which peculiarly interests it self in the disposal of Kingdoms, and in all the great Changes and Revolutions of Publick affairs, unless these men were of the Privy-Council of Heaven, and could hold intelligence with the Secret Decrees and purposes of God for the Government of the World, they can never be secure of Success, how hopeful soever their projects and designs appear.

If God take any care of human affairs, if he concern himself at all in the Government of the World, we may certainly conclude that his providence does principally order the Fate and Revolutions of Kingdoms and Common-wealths. Some Philosophers have questioned, whether God condescended so far, as to take notice of particular creatures; but all who acknowledged his Providence, thought

thought the great Concernments of Kingdoms, the placing or displacing of Princes, worthy of his care and peculiar regard: and therefore we, who are assured by our Saviour, that Gods care and providence extends to the Sparrows, and the Lilies of the Field, cannot doubt, whether he Rules and Governs in the Kingdoms of men, whether he who takes care of every particular creature, takes care of the general concernments of humane Societies, wherein the happiness of all particular men is involved. And can these men then think to pull down and to set up Princes at their pleasure? God may sometimes suffer Treason and Rebellion to be prosperous, but it can never prosper, but when God pleases; and it is impossible Rebels should ever know that, and therefore it is impossible, they should have any reasonable security of success.

There is nothing more expresly contrary to the revealed will of God, than Treasonable Plots and Conspiracies against Soveraign Princes: and though God does many times permit those things to be done, which he has forbid to be done, or else no man could ever be Guilty of any Sin; yet his forbidding of it is a plain argument, that he does not approve it, that he will not countenance it, nay, that he will not permit it, but where he sees great and wise reasons to do so.

God never indeed interposes by an irresistible power to hinder men from choosing that which is wicked, for he offers no force and violence to mens Wills: but when this wickedness is injurious to others, who are the objects of his care and providence, he many times interposes to prevent the mischief. The lives of private men are not at the disposal of every Ruffian; not a Sparrow falls to the ground without our Father, much less a man, much less a Prince, on whose life and fortune the lives and fortunes of so many thousands depend.

And therefore no man can reasonably promise himself success in Plotting against his Prince, but he who certainly knows, that God for some wise but hidden reasons, will suffer such a Villany to take effect; which no man can know without a Revelation; and we cannot think, that God will encourage any man by an extraordinary Revelation to do that, which he himself has expresly forbid, and threatned with Eternal death.

So that all such men act at infinite uncertainties; besides the punishments of the other World, which are reserved for Traitors; besides the many Natural contingencies and uncertainties of humane actions: if they believe, that there is a Providence which Governs the World, they have ten thousand to one against them, that God will not permit them to do, what they design: and those are bold men indeed, who dare vie Stratagems and Power with God!

Especially when they Plot against a Prince who seems to be the Darling of Providence, who has received so many wonderful and miraculous deliverances, as if he were still reserved for some Extraordinary service in the World. One would have thought, the discoverie of the Popish Plot, which no doubt was managed with as much Secrecy, with as wary Councils, and deep Intrigues, as any thing ever was, should have discouraged any new attempts in this Age: it should have brought to mind that Triumphant Psalm, *Why do the Heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? the Kings of the earth stand up, and the Rulers take Counsel together* (a more powerful Faction than some private Male-contents) *against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their Bonds asunder, and cast away their Cords from us. He that dwelleth in the Heavens shall laugh them to scorn, the Lord shall have them in derision.* At least it is time now to take warning, lest we be found

2 Psal. 1, 2, 3, 4.

fighters

fighters against God: it is a vain and a dangerous attempt to conspire his ruine, whom God hath hitherto so miraculously preserved.

Secondly, There is another Observation on these late Plots and Conspiracies, which no man can avoid making, and that is, how dangerous the disputes and differences of Religion are to the publick Peace and welfare of any Nation. Christian Religion indeed is the greatest security of Government, both in its precepts and examples; It commands every Soul to be subject to the higher powers, and threatens eternal Damnation against Rebels; It teaches us to give to every one their due; *Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.* It strictly enjoyns the practise of all sociable Vertues, and charms those boisterous passions, which disturb humane conversation; it requires us to obey our Superiours in all lawful things, and quietly to submit and suffer, when we can't obey. And the blessed Jesus, who was the Author of our Religion, and our great Pattern and Example, did himself practise these Laws, which he gave to us. He lived in obedience to the Civil powers; and though the Jewish Nation, which was a free people, the lot and inheritance of God himself, were then in subjection to the *Romans*, yet he would not give them the least encouragement to shake off the yoak, but commands them to *give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsars, and to God the things that are Gods.* Though he was a King, yet he was not *Cæsars* Rival; for his Kingdom was not of this world, & therefore he did not arm his Subjects to fight for him, as he told *Pilate.* His Kingdom was not to be set up in the world by force and power, but he gave testimony to the truth with his Blood, and commanded his Disciples to do so too. He died himself upon the Cross, and made this the condition of our Discipleship, to take

18 Joh. 36.

up

up our Cross and follow him; and thus the Apostles and the Primitive Christians did, they cheerfully followed their Master to the Cross, and conquered by suffering. Christianity was planted in the world by no other arts but the foolishness of Preaching, by preaching that absurd and ridiculous Doctrine, as the world then accounted it, of a Crucified Jesus; and it defended it self only by a resolute and patient suffering for the Name of Christ. This is the true temper and spirit of Christianity. Under the most barbarous and persecuting Emperours, no Christian ever suffered as a Rebel; they gave no other disturbance to the Government, than by confessing themselves Christians, and suffering for it. Their numbers indeed were very formidable, but nothing else; for in imitation of their great Master, they went as Lambs to the slaughter, and as sheep before their shearers are dumb, so they opened not their mouths.

But notwithstanding this, our daily experience tells us, that when Religion is divided into Factions and Parties, or rather men are divided into Factions and Parties upon account of Religion, there is nothing more imbitters mens spirits against each other, nor gives greater disturbance to publick Government. All the troubles and miseries, which for these late years have overwhelmed this unfortunate Island, have been owing to this cause; Religion has been made either the reason or the pretence of all: Papists plot and conspire the death of a Protestant Prince to bring in Popery, and profest Protestants, it seems, do the same thing to keep out Popery; and thus a Protestant Prince, and a truly Protestant, or rather a true Primitive and Apostolick Church, is in danger of both.

And is there not great reason then for Princes, who love their Lives and their Crowns, to keep a watchful eye over such busie, potent, and dangerous Factions? shall it be called Persecution for Religion, to punish Traitors,

tors, or to keep under a factious and turbulent Spirit? If the Consciences of Subjects will serve them to Rebel for Religion, it seems a very hard case, if the Conscience of the Prince must not allow him to hang 'em for their Rebellion: and yet no wise Prince will put it upon that hazard neither, if he can help it, to suffer his Subjects to deserve to be hanged. To curb a growing Faction by prudent and timely Restraints, is a much better and safer way.

The truth of this is readily owned, when it is applied to the Papists. They are men of such dangerous Principles and Practices, as not to be suffered to live in any Protestant Kingdom; and truly so they are, and thanks be to God, we have very good Laws against them; and whatever they may do in private, they dare not out-face Government with their publick and numerous Conventicles; they walk in the dark, and dare not own themselves to be what they are.

But yet I cannot but wonder upon what Principles those men Act, who are so Zealous against Popery, and think it such an unpardonable fault in Governors, to suffer any Papist, especially a Popish Priest, though never so obscurely and privately, to live among us, and yet at the same time think it Persecution, a horrible Persecution, not to grant a general Liberty and Indulgence to all other Dissenters. The difference between these two cases must either respect their Religion, or the security of the Government.

As for their Religion, I believe Popery to be a very corrupt Religion, and the greatest Apostacy from Christianity of any other Sect or Profession, which deserves the name of Christian; but yet I am so profest an enemy to Popery, that I abhor that Popish principle of persecuting men meerly for Religions sake, which can no more be justified in Protestants against Papists, than

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in Papiſts againſt Proteſtants. It is certainly the duty of a Prince to uſe his power and intereſt to Eſtabliſh the true Religion in his Kingdoms, to encourage the ſincere profeſſors of it, and to lay ſuch reſtraints upon others, as may be ſufficient to make them conſider, and hearken to wiſe inſtructions, that it may be no mans temporal intereſt to diſſent from the Religion of his Prince: and it is the duty of Church-Governors not to receive any into the Communion of the Church, or to caſt them out again, who do not profeſs the ſame Faith, or will not conform to the Worſhip and Diſcipline of the Church. And this is all, that I know of in this matter; and if men will call this Perſecution, it is a ſign, they know not what Perſecution means; for the Primitive Chriſtians, who were indeed perſecuted, would have thought ſuch uſage as this, a very eaſie and proſperous State.

So that the difference muſt lie, if any where, in the Security of the Government. That no Proteſtant Prince or Kingdom, can be ſecured from the attempts and Conſpiracies of Papiſts, whoſe Principles and Practices are deſtructive to Government: and this is the very true reaſon of thoſe ſevere Laws, which were made in this Kingdom againſt Popery. And it muſt be acknowleged, that there was formerly a vaſt difference between Papiſts and Proteſtants upon this account, and therefore a ſufficient reaſon for any Prince to make a difference between them; and I wiſh, I could ſay, it were ſo ſtill, but I dare not, I cannot ſay ſo. To deny that profeſt Proteſtants have ever Rebelled againſt their Prince, is to deny, that there ever was a Civil War in *England*, that there ever was a Proteſtant Prince Murdered by his Proteſtant Subjects with all the mock-formalities of Law and Juſtice; and he muſt have ſomewhat more than the impudence of a Jeſuit, that can

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deny this. And I would to God, we had but one instance of this, though that was a very bad one; it might have left some place for hope still, that this was not the temper nor the Principles of the men, but some unlucky juncture of Affairs, which transported them beyond the bounds of their Duty, and their own avowed Principles. The happy Restauration of our Banisht Prince might in some measure have expiated their former guilt, and they might have recovered their innocence, and the reputation of Protestant Loyalty, had they manifested the sincerity of their repentance by abhorring all the Principles and Practices of Rebellion: but he must be a bold man indeed, who dares make excuses for those who prove Rebels a second time; and he must be a bolder Prince, who will trust them.

And when every little Creature is so vastly concerned for Liberty and Property, can we think our Prince should be the onely unconcerned Person, when the Liberty and Property of his own Life and Crown is at stake? Or can any reasonable man expect, that he should encourage those Religious Factions, which by frequent experience he finds troublesom and dangerous to his Throne? When Religion turns into a State-faction, to curb and restrain and quell such pretences, is not to invade the rights of Conscience, or the liberties of Religion, but to secure the publick Peace, and to prevent the occasions of new Rebellions. And no sober Dissenter can reasonably blame his Prince for this, though he may blame those, and ought to express a just indignation against them, who forfeit this liberty by abusing it *for a Cloak of maliciousneß.*

And if we ever desire to see the peace and prosperity of our Sion, is it not high time to unite in Religion, which is the onely thing, that can bless us with a firm and lasting peace? All our late troubles have been ow-

owing to the differences of Religion; and while the cause of dissentions remains, though there may be some expedients at present found out to palliate the distemper, yet nothing can remove it. All men seem to be very sensible of this, and very desirous of an Union; but the question is, how or in what we shall Unite.

Shall we unite in Popery? God forbid! the salvation of our Souls is somewhat dearer to us than temporal peace, and that we believe to be exposed to infinite hazard in the Communion of so corrupt a Church. A firm and universal Agreement indeed in any thing, will secure the publick peace, but we must not make our Religion so wholly subordinate to temporal ends. If we can save our Souls, and secure the publick peace together, such a Religion ought to be chosen upon a double account; but if both these interests cannot be united, we must take care to save our Souls, and trust the Providence of God with our other concernments.

Shall we then unite with the different Sects and Parties of Christians, which are among us? This is to unite without Union. It is to unite indeed *against* something, but to unite *in* nothing. The several parties of Dissenters, who separate from the Church of *England*, differ as much from each other, as they do from us. They may unite and combine together in pulling down, but they can never unite in setting up any thing: they can unite in Tumults, and publick Disturbances, but they can never unite in Peace. When they had pulled down the Church of *England*, they could set up nothing in its room, but a prodigious encrease of Heresies and Schisms.

There is nothing then to unite in, but the Church of *England*, as by Law established, which will both secure the interests of our Souls and the publick peace. And why should we not unite in this Church? which is the

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Glory and the Bulwark of the Reformation, the envy and the terror of *Rome*. Whose Fathers and first Reformers were Martyrs against Popery, and who her self has been a Martyr for Loyalty. Those infinite dangers we are surrounded with on all hands, methinks should strongly encline all honest men, impartially to examine the reasons of their Separation: and I am confident, not onely what has been formerly written in the Defence of this Church, but what has been lately offered for the satisfaction of Dissenters, would open the Eyes of all sincere men to see their mistakes, if they would but calmly, without prejudice or passion, read and consider it. It is demonstrable, we can unite no where else; and is it a desirable state, to be perpetually struggling and contending with intestine Commotions? to be hating, reviling, undermining, each other? For Gods sake, beloved Christians, let us at last *consider the things which make for peace, and those things, whereby we may edifie each other*. And in order to do this, I observe further,

3. How dangerous a rash boisterous intemperate Zeal is, though it be for the best things, and against the worst. Whatever private discontents, revengeful or ambitious designs, might secretly act some great men, who know how to practise upon the zeal and the ignorance of the people; yet nothing is more evident, than that the first visible occasion of these new Troubles and Conspiracies, which have endangered the Life of our King, and the Ruine of his Government, was laid in a mighty zeal against Popery, and for the preservation of the Protestant Religion. The Popish Plot was the first Scene in this new Tragedy. Those bloody designs raised the fears, the jealousies, the indignation of men; and a love to their Prince and to their Religion, kindled and blew up their Zeal into such a violent flame, as threatned an universal desolation, and became more formidable,

midable than the danger it intended to remove. A great and passionate Zeal, like a distempered love, blinds mens eyes, and makes them mistake both their Enemies and their Friends. It fills their head with endless jealousies and fears, and makes them start and run away from their own shadow. Such a boisterous Zeal is the Frenzy and Calenture of Religion, which makes men uncapable of all sober Counsel, and prudent Resolves, and precipitates them into the most wild extravagant and irreligious attempts. There is nothing more pernicious than Zeal when it gets a head, and bears down all the considerations of Reason and Religion before it. When men are conscious to themselves, that they are engaged in a good Cause, and have honest designs, it makes them more bold and venturous: for though few men dare own it, yet the actions of too many sufficiently proclaim, that they think they may strain a point, and dispense with strict duty, when it is to serve a good Cause, when the honour of God, and the interest of Religion is concerned: such a zeal does violently push men forward, but it does not steer well, nor observe its Compass; and thus it is too often seen, that men who begin with a zeal for Religion, insensibly slip into State-Factions, and are engaged vastly beyond what they first designed, and engaged so far, that they cannot retreat with safety or honour, but must either Conquer or be Conquered.

Let us then above all things have a care of our Zeal, that we may not mistake an earthly fire, which burns and consumes, for that divine and harmless flame, which is kindled at Gods Altar. A true Zeal for Religion, is nothing more nor less, than such a hearty love for it, as makes us very diligent in the practise of it our selves, and contented, if God sees it fit, to lay down our lives for it, and very industrious to promote the know-

knowledge and practise of Religion in the world by all lawful and prudent means. A true Christian Zeal will not suffer us to transgress the strict bounds of our duty to God, or of our duty to Men, especially to Kings and Princes, whatever flattering prospect of advantage it may give. To lie, to forswear our selves, to hate and revile each other, to Reproach and Libel Governours in Church and State, to stir up, or countenance with the least thought, any Plots, Seditions, or Rebellions against the King, is not a Zeal for God, nor for Religion; for *this wisdom is not from above, but is earthly, sensual and devilish: for where strife and contention is, there is confusion, and every evil work.*

4. Let our past experience therefore teach us, to watch over the least stirrings, and first appearances of a seditious and factious Spirit, either in our selves or others, however it may be disguised with a pretence of Religion. Faction, like other Vices, has but very small beginnings; but when those beginnings are indulged, it soon improves and gets strength. *Omne in præcipiti vitium stetit:* when men once espouse a Party, like those, who are a running down hill, they cannot stop, when they please. Discontents and Jealousies are easily fomented, when we have once given admission to them; and the busie Factors and Agents for Sedition, when they find us never so little disposed and prepared to receive the impression, use their utmost art and skill, all the methods of insinuation and address, to make us Proselytes. I doubt not but many men have died Rebels, and suffered as Traitors, who at first did as much abhor the thoughts of Treason and Rebellion, as any of us can. Thus I doubt not but it was in our late Troubles, and thus I believe it is at this day.

Let such examples as these make us wary, how we begin to entertain, or to whisper our Discontents and Fears;

Fears; how we begin to listen to suspicions of our Prince, or of his Government, and to hear with pleasure, any scandalous stories or reflections on either: those who can with content and pleasure hear their Prince, and his Government reviled, will soon think him not fit to be their King.

And the great danger of such beginnings is, that we are not apt to observe them in our selves or others, when Religion is concerned in the quarrel. We think it all Zeal, pure zeal, and cannot suspect our selves or others, to be in any danger of turning Rebels. But whatever is in its own nature a degree and tendency towards Rebellion, is so, where ever, and in whomsoever it is found; and there is always more danger, that the beginnings of Vice should corrupt the best temper of Mind, than any hope, that a sound and Religious disposition should correct the malign influences of such a Vice. Some mens Religion does as much incline them to Faction, as secular interest does other men; and there is no such dangerous Faction, as that which is bred and nourished by the Corruptions of Religion. The Jewish Zealots, and the Christian Enthusiasts of all sorts, are too plain an example of it. And therefore when men, who make great pretences to Religion begin to talk or act Factiously, a fair opportunity is as like to make them Rebels as any other men. Thus we often see it is, and this is a sufficient reason to suspect all such beginnings, either in our selves or others, whatever glorious pretences we may have.

Let this at last teach us to learn from experience. One would wonder, that there should be any occasion for such an Observation as this: for those, who have not understanding nor reach enough to foresee the issues and events of things, yet when they have once seen, what the events of such actions have been, when they see the

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ſame things acted over again, they expect to ſee the ſame effects. Thus indeed it uſually is, thus it ought to be, if men ever intend to grow wiſe and happy; and yet our late obſervations will tell us, that it is not always thus. For if it had, the ſame Game would never have been played over twice, by many of the ſame men, in the ſame Age, and by the ſame Arts and Methods, and yet the people deluded, and the world bore in hand, that they deſigned nothing leſs, than to play the ſame Game again.

We ſaw all the Zeal, and all the Intrigues of 40. and 41. return again, and yet it was an unpardonable crime for any man to ſay ſo, or for any man to look as if he thought ſo. The cry againſt Popery was renewed, but indeed with a great deal more reaſon, than they formerly had, for we were in eminent danger of Popery; which is the onely difference between thoſe times and ours: but then our real fears and dangers of Popery were preſently abuſed to Factious deſigns, and made a property of to ſerve ſome more ſecret Intrigues. The old cry was againſt Popiſh Biſhops, and a Popiſh Liturgy, and Popiſh Ceremonies, and in a word, againſt the Popiſh Church of *England*; but one would have thought it impoſſible, that ever the Church ſhould at this time have been charged with Popery, when the Popiſh Plot was principally intended againſt the Church of *England*, and our King as the Supream Governour and Defender of it; and yet this was done too, and the King and the Church had like to have been brought into the Plot againſt themſelves. We heard new ſtories told of the growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government, when thanks be to God, we ſaw nor felt no ſuch thing. This was the main ſubject of thoſe infinite numbers of Pamphlets, that flew about; the Biſhops and Clergy were ſure never to eſcape, beſides thoſe many oblique and

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ſcurrilous reflections, which were made upon the King and his Government: and it is hard to name any ſtep, which was formerly taken to ruine Church and State, which theſe men could poſſibly take, and did not. And yet few men would ſee, whither all this tended, though no men were thought fit for any publick Truſt or Office, but thoſe who were eminent for their diſaffection to Church or State. I hope your eyes are opened now, to ſee what all this meant; and methinks it is but a reaſonable requeſt to you, that if ever we ſhould be ſo unhappy, as to ſee theſe things acted over again, you would not need being put in mind, what the natural tendencies and conſequents are; which is the onely reaſon why I mention them now. We had like to have paid very dear for disbelieving our own eyes and ſenſes, and former experience; it is certainly a cheaper and ſafer way to learn by former experiences than by new ones.

6. Let us now learn how dangerous a thing it is to interrupt the ordinary Courſe and Methods of Juſtice, let the pretence be what it will. Juſtice is the only ſupport and ſecurity of Humane Societies; and a ſtop or a breach here, is as fatal and dangerous, as a failure in the foundation, or the main pillars, which ſupport the building. When men are reſcued from the hands of Juſtice, againſt the moſt clear and notorious Evidence, upon a meer preſumption of their innocence, and a good opinion of them. What ſecurity can there be to the Government, when let men do what they will, if they can get and maintain a reputation of Zealous Patriots for their Country and Religion, they are out of the reach of Juſtice? Had not the good Providence of God interpoſed, this very thing might have coſt our King his Life and his Crown, and involved this miſerable Nation in a bloody War This Plot might poſſibly have been

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diſcovered ſooner, before it was ſo ripe for execution, had Juſtice had its due courſe; which I think it becomes all Perſons, who are concerned in it, ſeriouſly to conſider, with ſuch guilt and confuſion, as it deſerves.

7. I obſerve, that in times of publick danger, when we have Enemies on both ſides, it concerns us to keep a watchful eye upon both extreams. It is indeed a very hard thing to do this, but it is impoſſible we ſhould be ſafe without it. While our thoughts are wholly employed to ſecure our ſelves on one hand, where our danger is preſent and viſible, it gives opportunity to an unſeen and unobſerved Enemy, to aſſault us on the other.

When the Popiſh Plot was diſcover'd, all mens mouths were opened againſt Popery; we ſaw no other Enemy, we feared none, we ſuſpected none; nay, when there was too much reaſon for our ſuſpicions, we would believe none; we thought it impoſſible, that men, who expreſt ſuch an abhorrence and deteſtation of the Popiſh Plot, ſhould be laying new Plots themſelves. And we ſee now, what advantage they made of our ſecurity. And now the great danger is, that the Diſcovery of this Anti-Popiſh Plot, ſhould make men ſecure of Popery, and think there is no danger now from that corner. For my part, I am abundantly ſatisfied, that we are in great danger of both, and in the greater danger of both, becauſe their contrary aſſaults give great advantages to each other. The Papiſts now may Father their Plots upon Proteſtants, and Proteſtants upon Papiſts; and we may be involved in Blood and Confuſion, and neither know our Friends nor our Enemies. God of his infinite mercy preſerve our King and theſe Kingdoms, our Liberties, Laws, and Religion, from the wicked conſpiracies of all our Enemies.

Which is the laſt thing I ſhall recommend to you, to praiſe God for his preſervation of our King hitherto, and earneſtly to beg, that the ſame good Providence would ſtill watch over him for the time to come.

And certainly if ever we had reason to praise God for any Deliverance, we have for this, which is such a comprehensive mercy, as extends to all our concernments of Soul and Body in this world. If we value our own Lives, our Liberties, and Religion, if we value the Security of the Government, and the publick peace and safety, we have reason to bless God for the preservation of our King. Who can without horrour consider, what a distracted face of things we had seen at this day, had this Plot taken effect? who knows, who should have acted his part in that Tragedy? by what Mark or Test, they would have distinguished Friends from Enemies? Or what comfort had it been to any Loyal Subject, and good Christian, to have survived the Murder of his Prince, and the ruines of Church and State, and to have been an eye-witness of those barbarous Villanies, which would have been acted under a Mask of Religion? Blessed be that God, who giveth deliverance to his King, and sheweth mercy to his Anointed. Blessed be that Alwise Being, who sits upon the Circle of the Heavens, and sees and laughs at, and defeats all the most secret Plots and Conspiracies of wicked men. Let us bless God, and let us honour our King, and receive him with Joy and Thanksgiving as a new Gift and Present from the hands of God. When we are heartily thankful for the mercies we have already received, this will make our prayers more effectual for the continuance of them.

O Lord save the King, who putteth his trust in thee: send him help from thy holy place, and evermore mightily defend him: let his enemies have no advantage against him, nor the wicked approach to hurt him. *Which God of his infinite mercy grant, through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the holy Ghost, be honour and glory and power, now and for ever.* Amen.

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